# LAHOMA

BY

## JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS



### CHAPTER VIII.

**The Half Opened Bud.**

"BILL used to live seven miles away at the mountain with the precipice," Lahoma continued after she had told about the wonderful window. "But it was too far off. When he got to know me it tired him walking this far twice a day, morning and night, so at last Brick and Bill decided to cut some cedars from the mountain and make me a cabin. They took the dugout to sleep in. There are two rooms in the cabin—one, the kitchen, where we eat, and the other, my parlor, where I sleep. Some time you shall visit me in the cabin if Brick and Bill are willing. They made it for me, so I couldn't ask anybody in unless they said so."

"We aren't far enough along," observed Bill, "to be shut up together under a roof."

"I'd like to have you visit my parlor," Lahoma said somewhat wistfully. "I'd like to show you all my books. They were Bill's when we first met him, but since then he's given me everything he's got, haven't you, old Bill?" Lahoma leaned over and patted the unyielding shoulder.

She resumed, her face glowing with sudden rapture: "There are six books—half a dozen! Maybe you've heard of some of them. Bill's read 'em over lots of times. He begins with the first on the shelf, and when he's through the row he just takes 'em up all over again. I like to read parts of them—the interesting parts. This is the way they stand on the shelf: 'The Children of the Abbey'—that's Bill's favorite; 'The Scottish Chiefs,' 'David Copperfield,' 'The Talisman,' 'The Prairie,' 'The Last of the Mohicans.'"

"And so your cabin was built," Wilfred prompted her, "and the men took the dugout."

"Yes, and then—oh! The most wonderful thing happened. A family settled in the arm of the mountain at the west end—a family that had a woman and a baby in it. For three years I had the mother and her baby to show me how to be a woman. Then came the soldiers. Brick thinks a big cattle king stood in with congress, and he got the soldiers sent here to drive out all the settlers because they were beginning to farm the land instead of letting it grow wild for the cattle. Anyway all the settlers were driven out of the country, and it's been four years since I lost my only friends in the world—except Brick and Bill. What makes me and Brick and Bill mad is that the soldiers didn't have any right to drive out the settlers, because Texas claims this country, and so does the United States, but it's never been settled."

"But they didn't drive you out."

"You see," Brick explained simply, "we didn't want to go."

"It nearly broke Mrs. Featherby's heart to have to leave," Lahoma added, "for they'd got a good stand of wheat, and I think she liked me 'most as well as I liked her. But Mr. Featherby came from Ohio, and he had respect to the government, so when the soldiers said 'go' he pulled up stakes."

"We ain't got no respect to nothing," Brick explained, "that stands in the way of doing what we're a mind to. The soldiers come to force us out, but changed their minds. We will stay here at anchor till Lahoma steams out into the big world with sails spread. Nothing ain't more sheltering than knowing you have a moral right and a dependable gun."

"So that's about all," Lahoma went on. "These past four years we've just been to ourselves, with a long journey once a year to the settlements. And I've tried to do like Mrs. Featherby used to do and be like she was. She'd been to Europe, too, and she'd taught school in New England. She was like you—right out of the big world. She came out here because the family was awful poor. Is that why you left the big world?"

Wilfred shook his head. "I'm poor enough," he said, "but it wasn't that. It was a girl."

Brick Willock explained: "He's got a sweetheart. He's been carrying her letters for about two years. He's done spoke for, Lahoma, staked out, as a fellow might say, and squatted on."

Lahoma looked at him in breathless interest. "A girl out in the big world? Completely civilized, I reckon! Was she as old as I am?"

"She is nineteen years old and so thoroughly civilized that she thinks this part of the world is still overrun with Indians and buffaloes. She wouldn't live out here for a fortune, and she wouldn't marry a man back east without one. That's why I'm here. I didn't have the fortune."

"Does she love you, Wilfred?" Her voice was so soft, her eyes were so big, that Bill uttered a smothered groan, and even Brick sat up.

"She did the last time I saw her." He spoke lightly; but, gazing into the wonderful depths of Lahoma's eyes, he felt a queer sensation like a lost heart beat.

"Did she send you here as a kind of test?"

"Oh, no; she told me good by, and we parted forever. Both of us were poor. You can't live in the city if you're poor. You can be poor there, but not live. By this time she's found some one with property, I dare say. She's tremendously handsome and accomplished and has a very distinguish-

"Does she love you?"

ed looking mother, and they have friends in society. She'll make it all right, no doubt."

"Does it pierce your heart to think of her marrying somebody else?" Her voice was sweet with the dream passion of a young girl.

"When I left home I flung myself into the life of a cow puncher and did all I could to keep from thinking. So my heart's rather callous by this time. I don't seem to mind like I thought I would if I should sit down to think about it. That's what I've avoided like the plague—sitting down to think about it. But I believe I could sit down and think about it now pretty calmly."

"Then that's what I'd do!" Lahoma cried. "I'd just face it. She isn't worthy of you if she'd rather have a fortune than the man she loves. I'd just sit down and face it."

"I will!" He had never before thought it could be easy. It seemed very easy now.

"Maybe I could help you," Lahoma suggested earnestly. "If you come to the cove to visit us we will try to occupy your mind, won't we, Brick—and Bill?"

Bill looked at Wilfred glumly. "It's too occupied now, I'm afraid."

Lahoma opened her eyes wide. "What do you mean?" she demanded, sincerely perplexed.

"Bill," cried Brick warningly, "you're a-going to start a fire where they ain't even been no kindling laid."

Wilfred rose hastily. "I should like dearly to come and come often," he exclaimed, "but I couldn't force myself where I'm not wanted."

"In that case," remarked Bill inflexibly, "you're seeing me for the last time and may look your fill!"

Wilfred smiled at him tolerantly and turned to Willock. "I ought to go to my work, Brick. I won't try to explain what this hour has meant to me, for I believe you understand."

He held out his hand to Lahoma, who had risen swiftly at these signs of departure. "God bless you, little girl!" he said cheerily. "A man's fortunate who finds such oases along his desert trail!"

"But you can't go yet," cried Lahoma, not taking his hand. "There are a thousand things I want to do with you that I've never had a chance to do with anybody else—strolling, for instance. Come and stroll. I'll show you about the cove. Brick and Bill don't know anything about strolling as they do in pictures. Hold out your arm with a crook in it and I'll slip my hand just inside where you'll hold it soft and warm like a bird in its nest. Isn't this noble? And I holds back—excuse me—I hold back my skirts with my other hand, and this is the way we stroll, like an engraving out of the history of Louis XIV.'s court. Do, oh, do!" Her bright eyes glowed into his like beckoning stars.

"We stroll," he gravely announced, responding to the pressure of her fingers, but at the same time feeling somewhat guilty as Bill rolled his eyes fearfully at Brick.

When they were a few yards from the trees Lahoma whispered: "Make for the other side of Turtle hill. I want to feel grown up when I do my strolling, but I'm nothing but a little barefooted kid when Brick and Bill are looking at me!"

Hidden by the shoulder of the granite hill island, she stopped, withdrew her hand and stood very straight as she said with breathless eagerness: "Answer me quick! Wilfred, ain't I old enough to be a sweetheart?"

"Oh, Lahoma," he protested warmly, "please don't think of it. Don't be anybody's until—until I say the word. You couldn't understand such matters, dear; you wouldn't know the—the proper time. I'll tell you when the time comes."

She looked at him keenly. "Am I to wait for a time or for a person? I wish you'd never met that girl back east. I think you'd have filled the bill for me because, having always lived here in the mountains, I've not learned to be particular. Not but what I've seen lots of trappers and squatters in my day, but I never wanted to stroll with them. I don't see why that eastern girl ever turned you loose from her trap. I think a man's a very wonderful thing, especially a young man—don't you, Wilfred?"

"Not half so wonderful as you, Lahoma." His voice vibrated with sudden intensity.

"Hey!" shouted Bill Atkins as he and Brick came around the angle of the hill. "Hi, there! You may call that strolling, but if so its because you don't know its true name, if you ask me!"

Wilfred came to himself with a sharp indrawing of his breath. "Yes," he stammered, somewhat dizzily—"yes, I—I must be going now."

She held his hand beseechingly. "But you'll come again, won't you? When I hold your hand it's like grabbing at a bit of the big world."

"No, Lahoma, I'm not coming again." His look was long and steady, showing sudden purpose which concealed regret beneath a frank smile of liking.

She still held his hand, her brown eyes large with entreaty. "You will come again, Wilfred! You must come again! Don't mind Bill. I'll have a talk with him after you're gone."

"Of course he'll come, honey," said Brick, melted by the tears that sounded in her voice. "He won't get huffy over a foolish old codger like Bill Atkins. Of course he'll come again and tell you about street cars and lamp-posts. Let him go—he'll come back tomorrow I know."

Wilfred turned to Brick and looked into his eyes as he slowly released Lahoma's hand.

"Oh!" said Brick, considerably disconcerted. "No, I reckon he won't come back, honey. Yes, I guess he'll be busy the rest of the summer. Well, son, put 'er there—shake! I like you fine, just fine, and as you can't come here to see us no more, being so busy and—and otherwise elsewhere bound—I'm kinder sorry to see you go."

Lahoma walked up to Wilfred with steady eyes. "Are you coming back to see me?" she asked gravely.

"No, Lahoma. At least not for a long, long time. I don't believe it's good for me to forget the life I've chosen, even for a happy hour. When I left the city it was to drop out of the world. Nobody knows what became of me, not even my brother. You've brought everything back, and that isn't good for my peace of mind, and so—goodby!"

Tall and straight he stood, like a soldier whose duty it is to face defeat, and standing thus he fastened his eyes upon her face as if to stamp those features in a last long look upon his heart.

"Goodby," said Lahoma. This time she did not hold out her hand. Her face was composed, her voice quiet. If in her eyes there was the look of one who has been rebuffed her pride was too great to permit a show of pain.

(To be Continued.)

### A WOMAN.

SHE is a woman, but of spirit brave
To bear the loss of girlhood's giddy dreams;
The regal mistress, not the yielding slave
Of her ideals, spurning that which seems
For that which is and, as her fancies fall,
Smiling—the truth of love outweighs them all.

She looks through life and with a balance just
Weighs men and things, beholding as they are
The lives of others; in the common dust
She finds the fragments of the ruined star;
Proud, with a pride all feminine and sweet,
No path can soil the whiteness of her feet.

The steady candor of her gentle eyes
Strikes dead deceit, laughs vanity away;
She hath no room for petty jealousies,
Where faith and love divide their tender sway.
Of either sex she owns the nobler part;
Man's honest brow and woman's faithful heart.

She is a woman, who, if love were guide,
Would climb to power or in obscure content
Sit down; accepting fate with changeless pride—
A need in calm, in storm a staff unbent;
No pretty plaything, ignorant of life,
But man's true mother and his equal wife.
—Bayard Taylor.

### PERVERSITY OF WOMEN.

BOYS will be boys
Until twenty-one—no more.
Girls remain girls
Up to twenty-four.
—Kansas City Journal.

**Pleasant.**

She—What! Fanny Jones engaged? Well, I've always said that, no matter how homely a girl may be, there's always some fool ready to marry her. Who's the poor man? He—I am.—Boston Transcript.

The small courtesies sweeten life; the greater enoble it.—Bovee.

### PRETTY GIRL

Frances—Did you notice the quiver of her lips?

Arthur—Yes.

Frances—I wonder what it was doing there?

Arthur—Oh! I guess it belonged to the "Cupid's bow."

### RESEMBLED PA

Friend—And who does the baby resemble?

Proud Papa—Come outside and I will tell you. I haven't the heart to do it in the little fellow's presence.

### HE SHOWED HIM

"You didn't know that girl was married?"

"Not until I was printing a kiss on her lips and her husband showed me that I was making a typographical error."

### HIS PROPOSAL

Bessie—A fortune teller said I'd be rich some day.

Bert—One told me I'd marry a rich girl some day.

### A HIT

The Amateur—I've shot off my gun several times, and it kicked me over every time.

The Guide—It must be a source o' satisfaction to ye to know that ye brought down somethin', anyway.

## LAWS OF COMMERCE

By HAROLD CARTER.

It was a sudden impulse that took little Miss Dimsey into the private office of old Adolf Ludwig, proprietor of the cheap department store in which she worked. She went in boldly, her only encouragement the fact that old Ludwig knew her, and had once or twice stopped and spoken to her in his fatherly way.

"Well, Miss Dimsey!" said the old man, looking up over his spectacles and beaming at her.

Little Miss Dimsey's well-planned story broke down, and she broke into tears. The old man looked gravely concerned.

"Tell me your troubles," he said, handing her a chair.

"I've simply got to have my salary raised," sobbed Anita Dimsey. "I can't support my mother and myself on $8 a week."

"Well, well, so that's what the matter is!" said the proprietor. "Go on, Miss Dimsey."

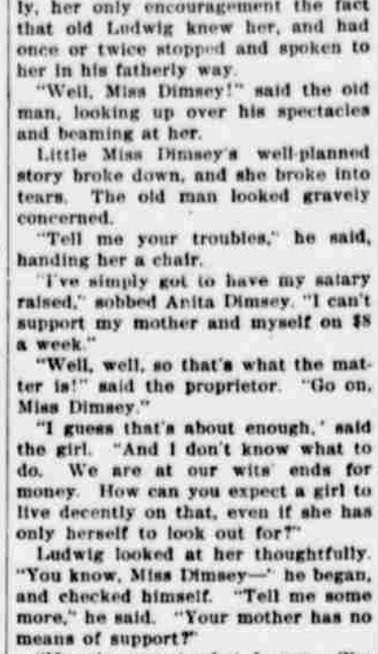
"I guess that's about enough," said the girl. "And I don't know what to do. We are at our wits' ends for money. How can you expect a girl to live decently on that, even if she has only herself to look out for?"

Ludwig looked at her thoughtfully. "You know, Miss Dimsey—" he began, and checked himself. "Tell me some more," he said. "Your mother has no means of support?"

"No, sir, except what I earn. She was in a publishing house, until she was crippled with rheumatism two years ago. Then I—I—" The tears began to flow again.

"Ha!" ejaculated Ludwig. "Excuse me, but—you aren't ever expecting to be married? That's what keeps wages down, you know. The girls leave."

Little Miss Dimsey's tears flowed faster than ever as she thought of patient Jack Livingston, working at $20 a week, and their desperate hope of making a home for three when he got $25. She blurted out all about it,



Little Miss Dimsey's Well-Planned Story Broke Down.

while old Ludwig waited with a smile on his grim, worn old face.

"I don't know what I can do," he said. "It wouldn't be fair to the other girls to raise you. Wages and salaries have their natural level. I can't break the laws of commerce just because you need money, Miss Dimsey."

She did not see the whimsical look on his face. She heard only the dreadful sentence.

"Then I must go—" she began wildly. "I must leave you. I must steal, anything—"

"Stop!" shouted Ludwig. "I can lend you a hundred dollars. I'd rather do that than have you get into that frame of mind. You can pay me back when you are married."

Miss Dimsey raised a startled face to his. She had heard stories as every working girl has heard them, about employers who make presents to their employees.

"Oh, no! I'd rather die!" she cried wildly, and made as if to leave.

Old Ludwig stopped her. "Wait a minute," he said. "I hate to think of your distress. I have thought a good deal about you, Miss Dimsey, because I know how hard a struggle you have. I am a very lonely old man. Be my wife, Miss Dimsey, and—"

"What do you mean?" faltered the girl, facing him in astonishment.

"Just what I say," answered old Ludwig. "Marry me, and I will give your mother a good home for the rest of her days and do my best to make you happy. Come," he added, smiling. "I am not likely to live very long, and Jack can wait. He will be the wiser and the better for his experience. Don't answer me now, but wait a week or two to see whether I am really crazy, and think it over. Good-day, Miss Dimsey."

He turned to his books, and little Miss Dimsey, bewildered, went back to her work. "Of course the poor old man is going mad," she thought.

But old Ludwig was anything but mad. Two or three days later he sent for her again.

"I'm going to Europe next week," he said. "If your answer is favorable I'd like to get married before I sail. I can't take you on a honeymoon, because it's only a case of toboggning port and returning, but I'll take you to Paris next spring. And to Florida for the honeymoon."

Little Miss Dimsey looked at him with tragic eyes. "Do you really mean it?" she faltered.

"Yes," answered old Ludwig.

"I'll marry you as soon as you wish me to," said little Miss Dimsey.

It was arranged that they should be married at the registry office in three days' time, on the morning on which Ludwig was to sail for Europe. Miss Dimsey and her mother were installed in the old man's house. It was all like a marvelous dream, the money, the clothes, the servants that waited deftly on them with stolid, carven, expressionless faces.

The desperate letter that had been written to Jack, telling him of the necessary sacrifice, brought him raging to the door. The butler, who had his orders, refused him admittance. Not even his vehement threats and offers of bribes could move the man. Of this, however, Miss Dimsey knew nothing, nor of the intercepted letter that Jack had written her.

The day of the marriage dawned. Miss Dimsey and her mother awaited Ludwig at the registry office.

"He'll never come," said Mrs. Dimsey with conviction.

But he came, smiling and gentle as ever, with a gardenia in his buttonhole, and, still in a dream, Miss Dimsey signed her new name, Anita Ludwig. The wedding breakfast followed, they saw the old man on the boat, and the two women were alone.

"It's hard upon Jack, my dear," said the mother wistfully.

Mrs. Ludwig cried. "I'm going to be a good wife to him," she answered.

"Him?" queried the mother, startled.

"To Adolf," said the bride.

They had three weeks to wait before the return. The days passed leaden-footed. Jack, who had received a notification of the wedding, contrived to waylay the mother and pour out his indignation. Anita he did not see.

The boat brought back no Ludwig, but, instead, a letter from London in a strange hand. It contained a notice of the old man's death in a London hospital.

Enclosed was a letter from Adolf Ludwig to his bride.

"I couldn't raise your salary," he said, "so I married you instead. I wanted to do a good act before I died. It was a case of a lingering death or a hopeless operation by Doctor Canning of London, the only man who can perform it. I knew it was a thousand to one that I should never see you again. Good-bye, Anita. You have been a good girl, and I have left you everything. I hope you and Jack will be happy. I'm sorry you wouldn't take that loan instead, but it was just a case of marrying you or breaking the laws of commerce, and I chose the former."

Anita looked up through her tears. "The dear, queer old man," she whispered softly.



## OLD CLAY PIPE HIS LEGACY

**Old Soldier Had Particular Reason for Valuing Trifle Left Him by Comrade.**

A touching little romance of a clay pipe was told to a London writer by a tobacconist.

It concerned an old gentleman who had every appearance of an Indian officer, and who one day brought the tobacconist just about the dirtiest clay pipe he had ever set eyes on. He wanted the bowl fitted with a raised cover in gold in the shape of a helmet, on which was to be engraved the crest and the motto of a certain regiment. The shopkeeper told the gentleman that they would do their best, but as the bowl was already cracked it would require careful handling, and wouldn't stand much pressure.

"Well," he replied, "if your workman breaks that bowl he'd better quit the country at once, for his life won't be worth a day's purchase."

Luckily, this weird threat didn't require to be put into execution, for the job was finished without a mishap, whereupon the old gentleman, after paying the bill, sent for the workman and gave him a present of $15.

He then condescended to tell the tobacconist that his reason for attaching so much value to a clay was that it belonged to an Irish soldier who had twice saved his life in a frontier war. The soldier was a bit of a ne'er-do-well, and never got promotion. When he died he left his clay pipe, which was absolutely the only thing in the world he could call his own, to the general—the tobacconist's customer.

**Will Written in Blood.**

The will of an Italian soldier was written with his own blood as he lay dying of bullet wounds. When reconnoitering enemy trenches at Riva, on Lake Guarda, in the world war, the soldier was discovered by the Austrians, and a hail of bullets laid him low. After the rescue of his body it was found that, while bleeding to death, he had removed his coat, spread it on a rock and written, with a stick dipped in his own blood, a short will leaving the little which he possessed to two young orphan nieces. The tunic was sent to a notary for execution of the testament and is preserved in the Italian archives.

**None Left.**

"I broke some records this afternoon."

"I didn't know you were an athlete."

"I'm not, but the next time my daughter undertakes to give a dancing party she'll find there isn't any music to dance to."